



serving East Mississippi and West Alabama

## The Montgomery Institute

Guided by the Leadership Legacy of G.V. 'Sonny' Montgomery

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October 19, 2006

Chairman Kevin Martin  
Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate  
Commissioner Michael Copps  
Commissioner Robert McDowell  
Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein  
Federal Communications Commission  
The Portals  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 06-74

Dear FCC Commissioners:

I am writing on behalf of my rural development organization to urge your approval of the AT&T-BellSouth merger. As President of The Montgomery Institute, I follow closely activities affecting broadband development in the rural areas of East Mississippi and West Alabama that we serve. I have been carefully following the proposed merger and it is clear to me that it will serve the public interest in our region.

For your information, The Montgomery Institute is the managing entity for a U.S. Department of Labor *Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED)* grant. A key component of this grant is to deliver innovative training to rural areas via broadband. Lack of access to broadband in our region, thusly, is a critical workforce development and economic development issue.

AT&T's recently announced commitment to much greater broadband access and affordability is right on point. Approval of the merger will directly address our critical need – *affordable* and *ubiquitous* service.

Among the commitments I understand AT&T has proposed to the Commission is one to reduce the price of residential broadband DSL to \$10 per month and to deliver broadband to *all* residential units in its combined territory, including lower-income and rural areas. If The Montgomery Institute could write a commitment it

wanted from AT&T, this would be it. These commitments will help drive high-speed broadband usage and help close the digital divide between rich and poor, urban and rural.

I urge the Commission to approve the merger of AT&T and BellSouth promptly so that consumers can benefit as soon as possible from the broadband provisions this merger offers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William F. Scaggs", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

William F. Scaggs  
President

cc: Marlene Dortch, Commission Secretary